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O 081420Z MAY 07
FM AMEMBASSY DAMASCUS
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC IMMEDIATE 3429
RHEHAAA/WHITE HOUSE WASHDC IMMEDIATE
RUEHAM/AMEMBASSY AMMAN 6783
RUEHLB/AMEMBASSY BEIRUT 4512
RUEHEG/AMEMBASSY CAIRO 3133
RUEHRH/AMEMBASSY RIYADH 7656
RUEHTV/AMEMBASSY TEL AVIV 1731
RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA 5066
RUEHJM/AMCONSUL JERUSALEM 1273
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL//CCPA//
INFO RUEHNC/AMEMBASSY NICOSIA 7398

UNCLAS DAMASCUS 000428

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DEPARTMENT FOR PA, NEA/ARN, INR/IC/CD, INR/R/MR:STHIBEAULT AND
JMCCARTER, VOA NEWS CA, NEA/PPD:CBOURGEOIS, AZAIBACK, AND
AFERNANDEZ, IIP/G/NEA-SA MDAVIDSON
WHITE HOUSE FOR NSC
CENTCOM FOR CCPA

E.O. 12958: N/A

TAGS: [KMDR](#) [PREL](#) [KPAO](#) [OPRC](#) [SY](#)

SUBJECT: Syria/Portugal, Syria/Oman, Syria/France, Sharm al-Sheikh
Conference, Mouallem-Rice Meeting, Winograd Report, Iraq,
Palestinian Territories (5/8)

11. Summary: Syrian papers on May 8 reported meetings on May 7 by President Asad and FM Mouallem with Portuguese FM Luis Filipe Marques Amado. Talks dealt with Syrian/Portuguese relations, the latest developments in the Middle East, the importance of boosting the European Union's role in dealing with regional issues, and Syria's relations with the European Union and means of boosting them through mechanisms based on mutual confidence. The Portuguese FM confirmed his country's intention, during its EU presidency next month, to work to boost its relations with regional states to enable it to play an active role in realizing security and stability in the region.

On Syrian-Omani relations, papers reported President Asad's meeting on May 7 with Omani Minister of Information Hamad bin Mohammad bin Mohsen al-Rashedi. Both sides reiterated the importance of intensifying Arab efforts, particularly in the media field, to confront anti-Arab media campaigns.

Papers also reported President Asad's cable of congratulations to Nicolas Sarkozy on his election as President of France. President Asad expressed hope for improved relations between Syria and France to serve the interests of the peoples of both countries.

End of summary.

12. Selected Headlines:

"President Asad discusses Syrian-Portuguese relations and the EU role in the region with Portuguese Foreign Minister Luis Filipe Marques Amado" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/8)

"President Asad confers with Omani Minister of Information Hamad bin Mohammad bin Mohsen al-Rashedi. President Asad reiterates the importance of intensifying Arab efforts, particularly in the media field, to confront media which harm Arabs and their just causes" (Government-owned Al-Thawra, 5/8)

"President Asad congratulates Nicolas Sarkozy on his election as new President of France" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/8)

"President of the Palestinian Authority Mahmoud Abbas calls on Israel to accept Washington's security suggestions" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/8)

"Israeli FM Livni holds consultations on the possibility of resuming peace talks with Syria" (Independent al-Watan, 5/8)

"Solana: The Winograd Report might change the political situation in the region" (Independent al-Watan, 5/8)

"The EU: We support participation of Iraq's neighboring countries in treating the situation in Iraq" (Government-owned Tishreen, 5/8)

13. Editorial Block Quotes:

"A Call for Settling of Accounts "

Izz-al-Din al-Darwish, an editorialist in government-owned Tishreen, commented (5/8): "In view of its enthusiasm in calling for the Sharm al-Sheikh meetings, its participation in these meetings at a high level, and its mobilization for their success, the Bush Administration has presumably realized that the deteriorating and catastrophic situation in Iraq cannot be resolved without a comprehensive review of the foundations on which the occupation was based. After that, the US Administration must review its past stands, correct its mistakes, and make a connection among the issues and problems of the region in order to reach comprehensive and integrated solutions...."

"At the same time, Syria believes that it is high time for the US Administration to realize that its policies in the region and its

unlimited support for Israel exacerbates the situation and prevents the resolution of the issues and problems of the region....

"Therefore, Syria calls for balanced and constructive dialogue with the Americans and for US reasonableness in dealing with the region...."

"Arab Reading of the Regional Scene"

Dr. Buthaynah Sha'ban, Expatriate Affairs Minister, commented in government-owned Tishreen (5/8): "The United States, through the Sharm al-Sheikh conference, wanted the international community to bring it out of the bloody crisis in Iraq.... US officials talk about security, border, and other issues without mentioning the real reason behind the tragedies, namely, the US occupation of Iraq, which is the reason behind all these bloody tragedies, which are a real holocaust. This tragedy will end only when occupation troops leave Iraq. Terrorism is a result of the war, and it came with the occupation...."

"The Sharm al-Sheikh conference represents an acknowledgement by the US Administration that it has failed miserably to find an exit from Iraq. But this acknowledgement has not reached the level of admitting military and political defeat and replacing the policy of arrogance, force, aggression, siege, and sanctions with a civilized policy based on dialogue. Everything that has befallen Iraq is a result of Bush's reckless war on this Arab country, which was safe and stable before Bush's war brought the tribulations of occupation, terror, killing, and torture of Iraqi civilians...."

"The peoples of Palestine and Iraq are being subjected to collective punishment that is in fact a major crime the Bush administration is committing against their humanity. But the two Arab peoples will not rest before they regain their freedom and sovereignty over their land and resources...."

"Significance of the Winograd Commission's Report"

Muhammad Khair al-Jammali, an editorialist in government-owned Al-Thawra, wrote (5/8): "The Winograd Commission's report is an explicit acknowledgement that Israel has failed to achieve its political and military objectives...."

"The report is a condemnation not only of Israeli leaders, but also all those who played a secret or a public role in that war, from the US administration, which was the main party that decided the war, to the 14 February team in Lebanon, which took the side of the Israeli aggression...."

Corbin